Enrico, although Luella was afraid in case the carriage got stuck in the mud and could not go any further.

The sun was sinking when finally they reached a very attractive village. The cottages had thatched roofs and gardens bright with spring flowers. Then there was a high wall obviously enclosing a park and finally two huge magnificent gates. They were surmounted by a coat of arms picked out in gold.

"We have arrived!" Alberto Drago said. "It has been a long journey."

"Far longer than I expected," Luella said.

"I think our coachman took the wrong road," he replied. "If we had come along the main highway, we would have reached here far sooner."

Luella felt it was no use thinking of that now. At least they had reached Gatestone Castle, and that was all that mattered. They went up a drive with huge oak trees on either side of it. Then she saw the Castle high above a lake silhouetted against trees that had obviously been planted as a protection. Looking at it, Luella thought it was like a jewel in a green velvet setting.

Then she remembered that inside would be the Duke! That meant she soon had to face the uncomfortable task of explaining to him why she had come from Italy to bring him his son. She had assumed when they left London that when he accepted Enrico she would return with Alberto Drago. There was no reason why she should be an encumbrance by staying a minute longer than she had to. But now, as it was so late, it could be more difficult. The Duke might feel

compelled to offer her some refreshment and a bed for the night.

As they drew nearer to the Castle she said quickly to Alberto Drago: "When I have seen the Duke and handed over Enrico. I would like to go back to London with you." He did not reply, and she thought he looked at her in surprise. She had, however, left it too late to say any more because the carriage was already in the courtyard.

In front of them was a row of stone steps which led up to the front door. The coachman pulled his horses to a standstill. As he had done in London, Alberto Drago got out first and walked up the steps. A footman on duty must have been looking out because before he had reached the top the door was opened. A second later a man who was obviously a butler appeared. When he did so, Alberto Drago came down the steps again and opened the carriage door so that Luella and Enrico could alight.

The little boy ran up the steps, obviously glad to be on the move. Luella, following more slowly, reached the top and said to the butler: "I think you have just been told that we have called to see His Grace."

"His Grace is expecting you, Madam?" the butler asked.

"No, but will you please tell him that we have come from Italy?"

The butler was too well-trained to express his astonishment. He merely said: "If you'll come this way, Madam, I'll inform His Grace that you're here."

The hall into which Luella stepped was certainly